

AMBASSADOR ROY M. HUFFINGTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview has not been edited by Ambassador Huffington]

Q: Today is the 26th of March, 1999. This is an interview with Ambassador Roy A. Huffington. We are doing this in Houston, Texas. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. And I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Well, Mr. Ambassador, could we start off with when and where you were born, and something about your past.

HUFFINGTON: I was born in the Houston, Texas, area on October the 4th, 1917. When I was small, we moved to Dallas and basically I grew up in Dallas. I went to grade school there in the North Dallas area, on to North Dallas High School, then went to Southern Methodist University in Dallas. I got a bachelor's degree in geology, and then went to Harvard. I worked my way through Harvard, getting a Master's Degree and a Ph.D. in geology. I ended up in 1942, after World War II had started.

Q: I'd like to go back a bit. Could you tell me a little about your father and your mother?

HUFFINGTON: My father's family came from the Houston Heights area. My grandfather was an attorney for one of the small railroads in the old days. My father was actually killed in an accident when he was relatively young. My sister and I were the only two children in the family; and we grew up with my mother as a widow. We lived in Dallas. And this was during the depths of the Depression. So there were slim pickings in those days, but we managed to survive, by a lot of hard work. I carried the Dallas Morning News and the Journal in the morning and evening all through high school. And we worked our way up and out of that.

Q: When you were in grammar school and high school, what were your interests?

The interests in those days, during the Depression days - there was absolutely no money around anyplace. Grown men were out looking for jobs. I was very lucky to get a job carrying that particular morning and afternoon paper. My interests were in making some money to help support my mother and in making the best grades I could in school. She was obviously very interested in her two children doing the best that they could in school. And we did; we were both members of the High Honor Society in North Dallas High School. My interest was strictly in studying and carrying the Dallas newspapers in that particular time.

Q: You went to Southern Methodist. This would have been in what?

HUFFINGTON: January, 1935. I had been double-promoted in the second grade, which was the worst thing that ever happened to me because I was out of phase all through grade school and high school.

Q: Just a little bit younger?

HUFFINGTON: Half a year out of phase.

Q: Why SMU?

HUFFINGTON: I had thought that maybe I would go down to the University of Texas. But at that time we were living just a couple of blocks from SMU and I thought I didn't want to go to Texas during the mid-year session. That I'd wait until the fall, 'til September rolled around. But in the meantime, when I enrolled at SMU, I enjoyed it so much and fell in love with geology that I thought I'd stay there. I lost all desire to go down to Texas. And three years after that half-year I graduated.

Q: What attracted you to geology?

HUFFINGTON: The first course. Of course, anyone born in Texas was always interested in the oil business. You heard a lot about it, and that's where a lot of money was made in those days.

Q: Had there been any family connection to the oil business?

HUFFINGTON: Not particularly. Everybody in Texas of course had friends that were in the business, people that had made money. There were tales about H. L. Hutton and some others in the east Texas oil fields. I didn't even think about that. But I was primarily interested in geology because of the history of the earth, after that first course. The earth is not dead; it is very much alive; the crust is moving around, and mountains are still being formed. And I wrote it down. It's been going on for several billion years, and it will continue that way.

Q: Did SMU have a strong geology department?

HUFFINGTON: No. Not a strong one at all. There were only about seven majors in it, and only two professors in the department. A new professor came in at the age of 23 who had been an undergraduate at SMU, a fellow by the name of Claude C. Albritton who then went to Harvard. In three years he had his Ph.D. and came back as a teacher to SMU. Claude was the one who inspired me to go away to graduate school. He pointed out that we didn't get as much geology as we should have been able to get at SMU because there was a small department. That's the reason I went away to graduate school.

Q: Were you doing some working while you were doing this?

HUFFINGTON: The only work, basically, that I was doing was being a lab instructor at SMU. Then at Harvard, after the first year, I became a Teaching Fellow up there. And at the end, really right after I had graduated, I went back for a few months as an Instructor because the Navy was not calling me up. I joined the Navy the last year I was up in Harvard.

Q: Why Harvard? I would have thought the University of California or the Colorado School of Mines or someplace like that would have been the place to go for further education.

HUFFINGTON: Harvard at that time had the best reputation for graduate school of geology I thought, in the United States. They had four very distinguished professors that were known worldwide. I was interested, not in studying oil geology, which they didn't really have. I think they had one semester course, but there wasn't much in that. I was interested in the basic knowledge of geology. The geology you could pick up on your own.

Q: Were you thinking of petroleum? Or were you just thinking of being a professor of geology or what?

HUFFINGTON: I was interested in going to work for some oil company. But when I went to Harvard, I got so interested in working with the students up there and teaching that had it not been for World War II I probably would have stayed in the academic field. But after World War II came along, I changed my mind.

Q: Did you have any other types of interest, types of reading or anything else, that you were working with while both at SMU and at Harvard?

HUFFINGTON: As a young fellow, I was always very much interested in nature, everything from trees and plants to hills and lakes. I read anything that involved animals and hunting. Field and Stream was a magazine I used to love. Those were some of my non-academic interests: nature itself.

Q: Did you read the books of Albert Payson Terhune, one of the authors; he wrote about dogs and things like that.

HUFFINGTON: No, not any one in particular. A lot of magazines. That type of thing primarily.

Q: Did you find Harvard different? Was it a different atmosphere than that of SMU?

HUFFINGTON: Quite a change. At SMU I had been president of my social fraternity. SMU probably only had about 1,500 people at that time, and I knew most of those people during that period of time. Harvard was a little bit different. Everybody was deadly serious in graduate school. Most of them were partially working their way through graduate school. As a result, even on weekends, since none of us really had any money, it was pretty hard for people to get together, to even go out and have dinner together. It was a very much work-oriented environment, particularly that first year up there.

Q: Did you find yourself, coming from Texas, being somewhat of an outlander?

HUFFINGTON: At that time, people wondered where was my cowboy hat and my cowboy boots. And I told them I didn't have a hat and boots and didn't have a horse, when they asked about that. The knowledge of Texas was not as great as it should have been at that time!

Q: This was really a different world in those days.

HUFFINGTON: It was. It was a lot more restricted. Ohio was still 'out West' for a number of the people in Boston.

Q: How did the Navy come about? Obviously the war started. But had you been in the ROTC or anything of that nature?

HUFFINGTON: I had been in ROTC in high school. But when the war got started, I of course registered. And I was given a deferment since I was in graduate school. That was true until about the time that we got into the war. Then I knew things would change, and that was my last year. So in the spring of the last year, I thought I'd go in to Boston and see if I could join the Army Air Corps. I knew where the Army Air Corps had been located. That Saturday though I found out they had moved; I couldn't find where they had relocated, and I kept circling where it should have been. I couldn't find it and I kept going by the Naval Recruiting Station and knew I had to join something. I was writing my thesis and I didn't have time to look around. So I stepped into the Naval setup. I almost got into the Naval Air Corps; two doctors against and one for, because I had some astigmatism in my left eye. But I was accepted for the AVS, Aviation Specialized Services. And so I became a member of the Reserve, to be called up at their wishes as well to go to their '60-Day Wonder School,' as we used to call it.

Q: Did they let you get your degree?

HUFFINGTON: Yes. I finished the degree, and I was supposed to go to work in Alaska for the U.S. Geological Survey. I had taken the exam and been accepted to do field work up there, but the Navy told me I could not accept that job. They wanted to call me up right after school was out. As it turned out, when school was out I told the U.S. G. S. that I couldn't take the job, then the Navy said they didn't need to call me up until later. Maybe in the fall, or maybe even the first of the year.

So, I went out to the University of Michigan to spend a week with my sister and her husband, who was a doctor going through resident school. Then I went down to SMU to the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity house that I'd been chairman of, to rewrite my thesis for publication. I was running out of money along about that time. I was there for nearly three months and got a call from Harvard saying, "Even if you can only come for a week, we desperately need you. Come back and be an instructor." So, I accepted that and went up to Harvard and was acting and teaching as an instructor up there up until around Thanksgiving time.

Q: 1942?

HUFFINGTON: 1942. Then the Navy called me up and said we want you to report in to Dartmouth. And so I spent, as I recall, mainly December and part of January, and maybe part of November, that I was there for the indoctrination courses we had to go through.

Q: Getting you ready for winter combat.

HUFFINGTON: It was the coldest weather I'd ever been in. They'd get us out and have us exercise in nothing but skivvy shorts. One morning it was about 30 below zero, and the Chief Petty Officer was a little late in getting out there. Everyone was violently moving around, some people popped their backs that day. The story was to make you tough. You had to get toughened up like that.

After the 16 days, then I finished and graduated as an Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve and I was sent down to Norman, Oklahoma, to be the Assistant Officer in charge of the fourth and final phase of the new Aviation Machinists Mates School. They were starting it on the south side of Norman, Oklahoma, and they wanted to train 2,000 Aviation Machinists Mates at a time.

I spent about five and a half months there, and just about learned what my job was all about when I got transferred to Pensacola, Florida to be the officer in charge of all the enlisted personnel at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola. I was to replace a fellow by the name of Bill Hutton, whose father had started the investment firm of Doug E. Hutton, a company in New York City. I was to be Bill's replacement.

But about two months later, suddenly orders came in and I was transferred to Washington to go through a photographic and intelligence school, and Bill was left behind. I found out that I guess the Navy had punched their computer buttons and they had pulled out geologists, and architects, foresters: people who something about land forms and buildings. Pulled a bunch of those out to go through the Photographic Intelligence School. The idea was that geologists and foresters could detect anything unusual in the way of land forms. We could identify artillery emplacements or foxholes, trenches and that. Whereas the architects could identify buildings and maybe what the purpose was for those buildings, and what was within them. I spent two months there and then was transferred to the Pacific Ocean Intelligence Center in Hawaii.

Q: In Washington, what did you do? Were you looking at pictures-

HUFFINGTON: We were mainly studying photographs using stereoscopes to get them three-dimensionally, learning to identify all sorts and fashions of airplanes. We had to pass a lot of tests on just a flash of an airplane, or whatever it might be. We were being prepared for the Pacific Ocean area. It was mainly to get us to where we could intelligently, when we were out on the front line, identify what we saw in photographs that had been taken by photographic pilots.

Q: Then when you went to Hawaii?

HUFFINGTON: Transferred to Hawaii to the Pacific Ocean Area Intelligence Center. It was in the charge of a full Naval Commander there, and they were assembling all the people in photo intelligence and in other forms of intelligence, but primarily in photo intelligence, to send them out in squadrons and groups out in the Pacific.

Q: This was about when, that you went out there?

HUFFINGTON: This was right after the first of the year in 1943. No, let's see; that would have been around 1944, probably January. They had so many soldiers, sailors and marines out there that the streets were crowded with them. They were getting ready to start pushing to the West. I was very fortunate. Some Naval Officer had moved out of a little cottage across from Waikiki Beach where there were a number of seaside cottages, they called them, for two people each. I was assigned to one of those cottages out there.

Since my work assignment was the late shift, and I came home around five o'clock. Whatever work we had was already finished by the first group that came in the morning; so I had very little to do during the first two and a half to three months there. It gave me a lot of time to roam the islands, at least in Hawaii.

I finally got so bored that I started screaming for Sea Duty. I couldn't visualize staying there for two years. They wanted me to replace a full Lieutenant who had come from Boston, and had been out there for two years and was going back to the States. They wanted me to be his replacement in the Photo Intelligence School. But I protested, and kept screaming for sea duty. One day, about four o'clock in the afternoon they said, "Here are your orders." I guess by then I was a Lieutenant JG, (Junior Grade). "Lieutenant, your orders are here. Report to the U.S. Carrier Hornet by about eight o'clock tonight." This was Hornet number seven in U.S. naval history; number six had been sunk in the South Pacific in the early part of the war.

Q: It was an Essex Class carrier?

HUFFINGTON: It was an Essex Class carrier. There was a new admiral on board, a fellow by the name of Admiral Jocko Clark who had been skipper of the Yorktown in early naval action in the South Pacific.

Q: Very famous-

HUFFINGTON: Famous carrier, known as The Fighting Lady. Saw a lot of that early action. Jocko was about one-eighth Cherokee Indian. He was a little bald except for a little ridge up through the middle of his head; and when he got into battles it sort of stood up like a dog's mane. It was closely cropped. He was one heck of a fighting pilot and Admiral.

I reported on board the carrier that night about eight o'clock. And I went up to see the admiral in what they call 'flag country' up in the bridge of the island. That is Combat Quarters when they were at sea. Jock asked me if I'd been to sea before, and I told him no. The only time was when I once took a boat from Galveston, Texas, up to Boston. Got into the tail end of a hurricane on that particular boat, which was a tourist type of boat. We had to stop in Miami and unload half the people. Took them off on stretchers, everybody was deathly sick from that sorry weather we were in. Ran on up to New York and then up to Boston. And I told him that was the only time I'd been to sea. He laughed and said, "Well, do you want to stand 'sea watches?' 'I knew the way he said that, I wanted to stand 'sea watches.' I said, "Yes, Sir."

The next morning we set sail about dawn. Two new carriers, four brand-new destroyers, and a lot of greenhorns on them. We didn't know where we were headed; we were headed out on a secret mission. It was west, and then north of Hawaii. Went up north quite a bit, then sailed west and got by all Japanese scouting planes that reported the area of the Philippines where we were cutting down to Palau in the southwest Pacific, and that's where our planes first hit the Japanese airfields down there, several thousand miles behind the front lines at that time.

I lost my first roommate who was a dive bomber pilot. He and I had to share the cabin right under the Flag Deck. His name was Armbruster, a young fellow from Ohio. He went into his dive over the target and they didn't know whether his wings were shot off, or the plane didn't function right. But he went into his dive and then he never pulled out of it.

The Japanese came out after us and I found out all these beautiful tracers you could see in the sky, they all had a bite, the shells on the end of that. But we hit the Japanese and then pulled back and came back in over toward Tarawa and the Marshall Islands, where we then participated in the next campaign which was to take the Marshall Islands. We hit the targets first; and then the Marines and the Army would get in and make their landings that way. But I was there on that carrier until late spring of 1945. May have been May or June of 1945, about a month before the war was over.

Then the last campaign in which we were involved, was all in helping support MacArthur down in New Guinea and in taking the Philippines. After this last campaign there were seven battle stars I got. The last one was for the action there at Okinawa. We were getting ready to land at Okinawa in support of the troops. We were ploughing in front of a typhoon that came up from what was called Formosa in that time (it's Taiwan now). We didn't know whether the typhoon was going to go back out to sea; instead it turned north by northeast. By that time we'd been part of Task Force 58; we were 58.1.

Q: This typhoon. What happened with it?

HUFFINGTON: We were playing around in front of it. We were the lead group of the four groups in Task Force 58. Finally, after a period the typhoon was going back in from east to northeast and pulling out. So we could reverse and go back in support of the attacks there at Okinawa. Admiral Bull Halsey was there at that particular time; he came out to replace Admiral Spruance of the Fifth Fleet. Spruance had gone back to the States for a bit, and Halsey was in charge. When we had found out that the typhoon was moving out in a northeasterly direction, it was decided to reverse the course. So 58.4 got across in front of the typhoon; 58.3, but 58.2, but 58.1 which was then the last to cross, was obviously on a collision course with the typhoon. One of the things I used to have to do was to see that photographs were taken. I got the photographic group to come in and start taking photographs of our radar which showed us distinctly on a beautiful collision course with that beautifully developed typhoon with a nice eye in the middle of it.

Admiral Clark kept trying to get Admiral Halsey to release us because otherwise we were going to be in the middle of it. And he did not, and would not, release us until we were sort of cut off well into it. And by then we had 80-foot waves. We had an 80-foot flight deck above and you could see the waves would come up higher than that, go way up in the sky and then plunge way down into it. The destroyers were having a devil of a time. Off the starboard at times I could see both screws on the destroyer; it looked like it was diving to the bottom. Both screws were up in the air. It looked like a moon shooting with the bow pointing up. They were rolling 65, 68 degrees. And I think we lost three of them. They plunged to the bottom with all hands aboard. I think we got one sailor that came off those destroyers. And the Cruiser Pittsburgh had its bow broken off and its forward gun mount. One of the jeep carriers: some of the planes got loose on the hangar deck, and a fire got started there. In short it was one mess, and it was totally unnecessary for anything like that to happen. All Halsey needed to do was to release us and let us go.

I was the only junior officer at the Board of Investigation. I was the only one who didn't have 'scrambled eggs' on his cap; I guess I was a full Lieutenant at that time. But that was because I had the watch during the time this took place. And in spite of what was said, nothing was done. It was all quieted down, and frankly I never had any use for Halsey after that particular period of time. He was a cocky little guy, tough little bird. And he'd never got a carrier sunk before. Our particular admiral's week was a short one-week's leave on the West Coast, because they wouldn't let us in a combat zone for a period of time. Then they sent us back for one week and then we rejoined the fleet when Halsey had picked it up.

Q: This typhoon is the setting for the climatic scene in Herman Wouk's book, *The Caine Mutiny*, which was probably one of the best fictional depictions of the Navy at that time.

HUFFINGTON: I saw the film, and it was fascinating to me.

Q: How about photo interpretation, did you find you were able to do much with it?

HUFFINGTON: Yes. I didn't do as much as I thought maybe I might have. We would plan sometimes, if there were going to be landings, of course after the Marshalls and later when we got into the Marianas. In advance, we would plan; we knew where the landings would be and they would send the fighter pilots in with photographic planes to take photographs of that. I would do a sort of quick-and-dirty look at the first instance to see whether we had what we needed, if there was anything useful and not useful. Then a lot of that stuff would be sent on back to be analyzed in more detail. Study the actual landings and what part of the beach we landed on and that sort of thing.

With each of the campaigns that we were in, we would write an action report. I would take 8"x10" pictures of some of the real action shots that went on and put those in those reports. Apparently they hadn't done that before, because they got real excited about seeing these pictures we would put in there.

Other than that, the majority of my work was actually standing watches at sea in combat on that. I guess one of the big battles that we were in was off of Guam while we were landing in the Marianas. We had supported our personnel landing in Guam and in Saipan, too, and to be sure they were softened up. All the big army was knocked out before our troops landed, and we got into what they called a 'Marianas turkey shoot' there.

Over 400 Japanese planes were shot down that day. The Japanese fleet had been pretty well pounded, and they lost a lot of it. This was their last attempt to get after our group, the Task Force 58. They sent their few remaining carriers and a lot of ships and everything else down one day. By then the kamikazes had been pounding us a lot, because the Japanese didn't really have too many bombs left. They'd even load a 16-inch shell on the kamikaze and they'd tell them to dive right into the deck. But where we got hit by the Japanese, and we found they were 150 miles or more to the north of us. We found out from listening to the Japanese talk to each other that they were told to come down, launch all the planes, then turn around and head back for Japan. The planes were supposed to attack our fleet and then land on Guam, to be taken prisoner or whatever happened to them. They were abandoned. They [were] shot down [by] our fighter pilots. They shot down all these Japanese planes.

It was getting a little late that day when it was decided to launch everything we had to catch up with the Japanese fleet and see if we couldn't demolish the rest of it. So we cruised, at full speed ahead, in the direction of the Japanese fleet and launched all our dive bombers, torpedo bombers, fighters, anyone else. They got the Japanese fleet. Sank one of the big remaining carriers, and messed it up pretty well. I don't remember now what all we sank. But that was the end of Japanese fleet action.

And then the pilots headed back, but they were beginning to run out of fuel. It was many miles before we got there. And they were bumping off in the ocean. As it had gotten dark, we turned on all the searchlights and put them up into the sky so the pilots would have something to steer by and get in. It was pretty nasty that night. Japanese planes were trying to land on U.S. carriers. And we would wave them off, but there was a lot of commotion going on.

So in the course of that evening at one stage I had stepped out on the wings of the bridge just for a second. And I saw, I think it was the Yorktown and it was off on our starboard side. It was taking a plane on board, and the wind was shifting. It cut a little bit to the port side, the left side. As they did that, we had to turn to keep from having a collision with it. But just before that, I had seen a dive bomber from the Hornet that had a white ball on its tail land, obviously trying to land parallel to the carrier so it would be seen, landed in the water and the pilot and radio man got out. As I watched, I didn't know who was in that plane. Then we had to turn to port side, and unfortunately we swept sideways over both the pilot and plane.

Q: One of the things you're talking about is the inexperience and the youth of the people who were manning these fleets. You had some crusty old admirals and you had a contingent of Naval Academy graduates and all. But, at the same time you had people like yourself. This fleet, this huge fleet, was mainly civilians.

HUFFINGTON: Mainly Reserves.

Q: Was yours sailors, most of whom hadn't been to sea? I mean, it's really remarkable.

HUFFINGTON: Well, it is true. Actually, I guess I was about 27 at that stage. I was one of the older ones. Incidentally, the person who was washed over was my roommate.

Q: Towards the end, then what happened with your Task Force?

HUFFINGTON: There's always watching when we were in the typhoon up there. I saw what was happening to the carriers. They were rolling 65, 68 degrees and over. While I was on watch there, on the forward part of our flight deck, I thought I was on the desert one time with sort of mirages and shimmering, because it looked to me like the two forward front ends of the carrier shimmered just a little bit. I thought that can't be true. And when the thing came up the next time, it shimmered a little bit and I blinked my eyes. I thought, "Am I losing my vision?" The next time it came up when it went down, suddenly the whole flight deck was wrapped around the bow of the carrier.

Q: Oh, boy.

HUFFINGTON: Just the front leading edges, the leading corners around the carrier. Needless to say, after the typhoon abated we came out the other side. We spent a day picking up whatever we could.

Jocko had been given a new assignment, as the skipper of the Naval Air Base in Corpus Christi, the training base there. So I flew with him to Corpus Christi and from there went on up to Dallas. From Dallas, I had a few days there, a little bit of leave, and then went on up to Washington. I spent the rest, whatever it was, five or six months, at the Naval Air Station. I guess it was more in the Naval photographic general deal. In the meantime, I had gotten married to a young lady I had met down when I was at SMU, five or six years younger than I was. We had had some dates while I was still in the States, and when I came back I went through Dallas and I proposed to her. We got married October the 26th in 1945. Then after I got out of the Navy, I went to work for the Humble Oil Refining Company in Houston, Texas.

Q: What attracted you to Humble?

HUFFINGTON: After being at sea for a year, or a year and a quarter, I was sick and tired of salt water. I wanted to get back in the mountains where I could map rocks and smell the trees. And out of 17 oil companies that I called upon, they all wanted to hire me because they were all desperate for the geological expertise. But none of them had a job in the field except for Humble Oil and Refining Company.

They wanted to do some field geology out of New Mexico, southeastern New Mexico. My Ph.D. thesis at Harvard had been in equipment mines in the first mountain range east of El Paso. And this was just to the north, so I was a logical fit for that.

When I heard that they had that, I came down to Houston to see them. I really didn't know much about Humble in those days; I think they had one or two service stations in Dallas, and that was about all. To make a long story short, a man by the name of Morgan Davis was the vice president in charge of exploration. He immediately wanted to put me to work. It was a little bit later, about a month later, before I actually went to work on January the first, 1946. I was sent to Midland, and I was there for six weeks waiting for another geologist to come to work with me out there. Then I went to Roswell to do field geology in the Guadalupe Mountains. Another fellow and I mapped, maybe the southern two-thirds of the eastern half of New Mexico in about a two and a half year period, in sort of a detailed reconnaissance which meant we were mapping every square mile at geological observation symbols.

Q: Could you just give a brief overview. What was Humble in those days?

HUFFINGTON: I didn't know much about it; I knew about Shell and Texaco and all of those. Humble didn't have much in the way of service stations up north. By 'north' I mean in Dallas. Humble was actually the largest oil company in the United States at that time. They had nearly 400,000 barrels of production a day. In Mexico, they had a couple of hundred thousand barrels a day. Humble was one of those companies that was put together by a number of independents back not long after they broke up the Rockefeller trusts and created Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of New York. All of which became these other companies.

There were about ten companies that each had 1,000 barrels of production a day, back in those early days. They decided they'd put all their production together and set up a company. So let's say they had about 10,000 barrels in all in a day and they built a little company. The tanking of oil was good, and they all had good people, and land. They just built that little company and it was the largest oil company in the U.S.

These fellows built the Humble Company, and it was the largest oil company in the United States. But as I was saying, Esso had begun to buy into it. So, at the time I was put into a management training deal after I'd been with the company about five and a half years. Not necessarily appointed to the board by what you amounted to, but you got training in all different aspects, not just the geological. The law, refining and engineering, production - all that sort of thing. Passed that while you were on the way up. And I did that.

But at that time, Esso actually owned 82 and 1/2 per cent of the Humble Company. They owned 100% of Carter, which operated across the northern tier of the states. While I was in that management training job, I worked on a merger between Carter and Humble, but Humble didn't want to pay the extra \$10 million or so that Esso wanted. And they still felt independent, they said they'll control us even though they've merged with us. And they didn't do that.

It was about two and a half years, in fact I'd been with the company for about ten years, when Esso contacted me and wanted to go to Europe to open a new company. They were thinking about opening a new company in Denmark. I kept thinking, "Denmark's about the size of Harris County, Texas, and not much territory." I guess if I'd known Copenhagen then like I do now, I'd have gone. It's a lovely place. And actually, they didn't do that; they opened it six years later down in the Netherlands where they found the North Sea field, the largest gasoline field in Europe.

I decided that I didn't want to go over there, because once you got into the Esso group you always ended up back in New York City. Even if I headed the company, I liked New York, but I didn't want to raise a family on Manhattan. So I jumped ship, much to the consternation of my boss Morgan Davis, who by then was Chairman of the Board of Humble. He told me, "You're going to be on the Board; just keep your britches on." I was 49, and so to his astonishment I did resign one day. He said, "I want to show you the new promotion, you're going to be absolutely happy. Let me show you; they're in the drawer. I'm going to put in an announcement next week." I told him to shut the drawer. I didn't want to see them, because it had taken me a week of agony when I decided to leave the company that I really liked, and had planned to be with all my career.

Then I jumped ship and went out on my own. I'd saved, although I was an up-and-coming man, in ten years only about \$19,000, living frugally. The President and CEO probably in those days only got about \$80,000 as I recall. So I thought on that \$19,000 I could live for three years. My rent on the house we had bought in Belair at the time we came to Arizona was only \$80 a month. I thought I could survive for three years, and if I didn't make it by then I was in trouble. He said, "If you don't make it, come back." That was nice as we never told people to do that. But I also realized I couldn't do that, because if I didn't make it, I really should get the hell out.

So I left, and after 18 months I'd spent half of that, and had to figure out a market relation that was credible. We were in a little bit of a recession in 1956 when I did leave. In those days, a \$400,000 well, if Humble dug one the whole Board had to approve it. It was that expensive. The way it was around the U.S., independents were the ones digging \$50,000 and \$100,000 wildcats.

So I figured if I could find a field extension in somebody's field, it would cost a quarter of a million and up. And it was only one or two wells; that would eliminate the major companies. They had to have big fields, and I just wanted two wells. At a quarter of a million and up that would eliminate the wealthy independents because they were digging cheaper wells. And I'd better be about 85% certain that I was right on the geology. If I dug two, I should get one, and so I should somehow have some income.

The first well was 14,000 feet in southwestern Louisiana down in the marshes of Dominion Parish. And it came in with 150 feet of gas, and within about ten feet of where it should have been. Just sheer luck on that, and it would never happen again. It didn't take many wells that first five years with that plan, 17 or 18 and only one was dry. That gave me the credibility to start raising money.

I finally got fed up with the Federal Power Commission regulations around 1967 because they would give you a price in those days of about 24 cents a thousand cubic feet of gas. After about seven years of hearings, and finally settling, they gave you a price too high. I think it was 21.625 the price should have been for most of the gas, and in a couple of cases 18 cents. They'd get back to the owner for collection. I think it was close to seven percent interest we had to pay, which meant you were broke. You didn't have money in your pocket. So I had to work out a trade to get them to take the future income from the wells to pay off that backstop. I told them I was going overseas; they could tell Congress they could go find the oil. Because as we didn't know what you could sell it for, how could we build a company. And in that respect, they probably did a favor for me because I ended up going to Indonesia, where no one wanted to be caught dead in those days.

Q: What attracted you to Indonesia?

HUFFINGTON: Indonesia is a country I used to read tales about as a boy. Sumatra and Borneo and the Spice Islands and Java and all that. Didn't see any of that in World War II because we didn't get down in those islands. We stayed just northeast, or on the fringe, of the Philippines and north of New Guinea. But of course during World War II the Japanese took over Indonesia and there hadn't been much exploration. Then the Indonesians fought for their independence from the Dutch for a couple of years or so, and they got their independence. Then after they got their independence they began to nationalize the oil companies.

Q: Under Sukarno.

HUFFINGTON: Yes, under Sukarno. They had just nationalized Shell about the time I went down there, and the plan was to nationalize all the majors. I thought I'd better go see what's what. Because it looked like it was going to stop when Sukarno was obviously going to be taken out. Suharto was one of the seven or eight generals that they wanted to kill the night the Communists started that attempted Communist coup [in 1965].

For two years after that, the economy was down in the mud. I've never seen anything so bad as when I went down in January of 1968. Another fellow and I were going to put this thing together. Four of us got off the PanAm flight that night, landing in Jakarta. We looked through the windows of the terminal, and we saw light bulbs shining someplace. And they pointed us over there. There were holes in the tarmac that we stumbled over. People were smoking cigarettes in there and this one light bulb hanging down. Our luggage came up. The other couple happened to be a retired couple from Amarillo. We all ended up at the Hotel Indonesia, which was [built by] Japanese reparation [funds] in Indonesia. I don't think there were a dozen people in it. The other couple left the next morning; they said they'd made a mistake and come to the wrong place.

Art Sprawl, my companion and partner, and I agreed that if we put it together, he'd have half the deal and I would have half the deal. But we stayed and started negotiations which ended up eight months later in August with a contract signed for oil and gas in Indonesia. That turned out to be a major, major oil operation. We ended up, probably in to the end we had close to 2,500 people on the payroll over there. At the time, I had to sell the company to go off and [become a] U.S. Ambassador. Probably the only oil operation, we had 25 or 30 billion put into it. We didn't own the plants; we didn't want to own any plant. When I say \$25 billion, that was the cost of the LNG plants and other things. Our [local] group of exploration people they finally put together, did have about \$4 billion in the building and field development and stuff like that. It turned out to be a major operation, the second largest source of currency exchange in Indonesia.

Q: Were you always keeping in mind in Indonesia - and it was run by Suharto at that time - what had happened previously? Were you always sort of ready to pick up and leave? Possibility of nationalizing what you were doing, which would screw up the works.

HUFFINGTON: No, I was never so confident of anything in my life as when I first went down there to see the officials that were working at that particular period of time. The Energy Minister was an electrical engineer as I recall, with a Ph.D. from maybe MIT or someplace in the States. He said this was the last chance he thought Indonesia would have. They had to really do well. The only source of income they had would be a quick oil and gas income.

I was impressed. You'd meet with him at six in the morning or at midnight, with the guards still standing around with guns. You'd see a man work 18 hours. After the morning meeting, maybe you were supposed to meet in the afternoon and he'd call the hotel and say, "I can't meet with you now." Finally you'd meet with at midnight at his house. I could see these were super-dedicated people, very serious. They wanted you to come in and invest. Most people, most major companies, weren't sure they wanted to be in there at all, because Shell had just been nationalized. So I was very confident that there was a lot of oil and gas to be found there. There had been no exploration, really, gone on since the beginning of World War II.

Q: How about the American Embassy. Did you find yourself checking with them, or did you just go on?

HUFFINGTON: No, I found that in some of the professional embassies a lot of times word gets out that so-and-so is in town looking at something. In the oil and gas business, if you're after some particular acreage or a play, you'd better not advertise it to your competitors. Or they'll all be in there with more money or more people than you can afford. And they'll take it away from you. So I stayed away from the embassy. I guess Marshall Green was the ambassador at the time. And Marshall had some sort of little reception the night before when we were supposed to sign the contract the next day at his residence. Marshall cautioned me, "I've seen people like you before that got involved and they went the next day and nothing was signed. Don't count on it there." And I thought, well gee, I'm confident they will. I knew Sutowo was head of Protemena. I had great confidence in what he was doing because he really wanted people to come in and explore. We were essentially the early serious group that got in there.

The next morning we met at the - I guess where the Shell resident manager's house had been taken over, they were going to make a Petroleum Club out of it (or that was the plan) - that's where we were to meet for the signing. We got over there, and we didn't see anybody. Sprawl and I were sitting there about 30 minutes early, and in 15 minutes we didn't see a soul. And I began to think what Marshall Green had said. And I thought, gosh that can't be possible. Well, the number two man and the one who had been in charge of the negotiation - about ten minutes before we were to have the meeting - suddenly appeared on the scene, and he said, "We can't sign this." I thought, gosh, was Marshall Green right?

Well, it turned out we had no way to identify what acreage we wanted. They didn't have any maps. At one stage we had put in there 'everything in Sumatra south of the Equator, except what is held by other people' to try to tie down some acreage. We did something like that over in Kalimantan in Borneo. They had finally picked this up, and of course it did give us the right to go back in and pick up additional acreage. That's what they had spotted. When they didn't spot it, they had no objections originally. So we sat there and changed three or four words in the printed form. And with that we went in and there was Sutowo with all the officials. The press was there. The lights were all on. And the official signing, and that was it. So it worked out alright.

Q: How did you find dealing - this was around what, 1968?

HUFFINGTON: 1968.

Q: How did you find dealing with Suharto over the years? Because the Suharto family became more rapacious, from all accounts. Did this become a problem?

HUFFINGTON: We had no problems whatsoever. We didn't have to pay anybody any bribes or anything like that. Well, we wouldn't have; we were totally against that. We did pay them \$100,000 as a signing bonus. Which was like you buy a lease, you do something else. Sprawl had to come up with \$50,000 and we came up with \$50,000. That's all we ever paid anyone on it. We had no problem. Of course, Suharto was not president yet either; he was just the general in charge of trying to straighten it out. It was that next year, I guess, that he officially became the president.

But we dealt primarily with Ibnu Sutowo. He was a very official and effective working individual who didn't put up with any monkey business with any of his subordinates. If there was a problem, we could talk to him. We could get everybody in the room at the same time and get the problem solved and move on. It was actually a real pleasure to work with the Indonesians and we developed many close friends over there. At one stage, I thought we were getting bigger than Mobil and I had to laugh. I said, "Maybe we're getting as big as Mobil in Indonesia, but they're big all over the world." Mobil and ourselves both ended up finding gas at the same time, literally the same month. We in Kalimantan near Borneo, and they in Atjeh, in Sumatra.

We started, when it was decided that we would do the LNG plant to sell gas to Tokyo, to Japan, it was decided that Bechtel would be the contractor. I put together what I called 'our liquified natural gas deal' where I got 50 names of the best LNG (liquified natural gas) people in the world, people who knew about cryogenics, from Washington and everywhere else. Out of those 50, we came down to the top three and then hired the top two.

With those two we built our team. The operator at Bechtel must have had 55, 65, or 70 engineers. And I'd be out at Bechtel's sometimes, and they were working on every detail of the drawing. Steve Bechtel came to see me one time here in Houston, and said, "Why don't you stay out of our hair and let us design this plant getting constructed. What's a geologist know about LNG?" I said, "I know enough about it from our previous experience that there's nothing complicated about it. It's the size and scale of the operation. Just clean up the gas and the impurities, shove it to 260 degrees below zero Fahrenheit and turn it into the liquified natural gas. You have to handle it with certain care."

But I said, "George Spear, sitting between us, knows more about it than either you or I because he had been in charge of Procon's overseas division that worked with Shell on the only other big plant that had been constructed." It was over on the westside of Kalimantan, actually over in Brunei, where Shell had the first large liquified natural gas plant. He'd been working with Shell for a bunch of years on experimentation, on what's good and what's bad. So when we brought him in, we had someone who had actually built one of those plants and was familiar with it. To make a long story short, we concluded our plant a year before Mobil completed theirs. Turned it up to 140% of design capacity, and they finally got up to about 120% of design capacity about a year or so after they got on.

So we built a real [benefit] in Indonesia that the Indonesians recognized. They were very happy with us because they could call our director directly; any of our people would [go] to work on any of their problems. Sort of like the operator took [charge] in whatever form they needed help on.

Q: I assume you were also you were having a good number of Indonesians coming to the United States to train?

HUFFINGTON: We had a lot of them come. One class of 35 we wanted to train as accountants, sent them out to Thunderbird in Arizona. They had a specially designed course . We had training schools in Indonesia and a bunch of them up in Borneo in Kalimantan where we would train machinists, welders; we had all sorts of things. In fact, we sort of supplied eastern Kalimantan; people would come invade us all the time. They'd come for the newly-trained people we had, and hire them away at more salary than we could afford. It was fun doing that; we didn't mind that at all. It was good to help them, and help the country that way.

Q: Well, now we're coming to the point where how did you get into the diplomatic business?

HUFFINGTON: You have to recognize this thing called 'mortality.' And I'd gotten to be 72 and it was really time for me to step out of the company. The question was what should I do. I had been offered ambassadorships a couple of times before, and never been interested. My son said, "Dad, why don't you go be an ambassador?"

Summer of 1989, my wife and I drove from Poland down to Bulgaria, through Yugoslavia, sort of looking. I was curious as to whether the Wall might fall down in Berlin. I thought if the Wall falls in Berlin, the place to be ambassador might be in Austria because it had been a neutral country. And I could go for that. I've always promoted business for people. I like to see people get involved. And I envisioned it might. So if it did fall, I thought I'd see if I could get a job as ambassador. When it did fall, late that year [in 1989], I flew back a short time after that to talk to Jim Baker, who was Secretary of State. I told Jim what I would like to do, I would like to be an ambassador and I'd been thinking about it. He mentioned several places including Indonesia, but I said no, that's really probably a conflict of interests. What about Austria? I looked and saw the ambassador's term was up about a year from the time I was talking. I thought that would give me time to straighten out my affairs.

And I told him what I wanted to do, to come over and set up a bunch of conferences where we could create business for U.S. companies. At that time they were being pretty depressed, because 1986 surprised them all, went from \$40 down to \$10 a barrel. The business was in terrible shape, and other businesses were also. So I told him what I wanted to do: create business in those old Warsaw Pact countries, six of them there. We talked for nearly an hour, and he said, "Well Roy, I'll let you know. I'm seeing the President this afternoon."

I flew home, and I thought the way Washington works maybe I'd hear in two weeks, two months, who knows. Jim did say one thing. He said that "the job may be open quicker than you think." I didn't realize that the ambassador had resigned at that point. So I flew home, and the next morning I had a call from Washington that I had a new job! Well, I'd known Bush for a long period of time.

Q: Bush and Baker: had you been involved with them?

HUFFINGTON: Baker, I'd used his [Texas] law firm in the early days here. And Baker had been in that law firm. I knew him through the law firm.

George Bush I first met, as I recall, at some gathering or something at Midland when he first went out there. And later I came in to Houston with the Humble Company. No, no, that's when I came in to Houston; but Bush came in later, I guess after he had been working with Hugh Litke, he branched out with [a] drilling company headquartered in Houston. So I'd seen him in the summer in Houston. We were not buddy-buddies like some of George's friends are. But at least we knew each other.

After he was out of office and I had come back down one time and we had lunch together I told him our trails first crossed when I was on the Admiral's staff in the Pacific at the time that he was shot down. I actually had helped the Flag Lieutenant, secretary primarily, plan a couple of those little sorties in there, and we had arranged to have a submarine present which we always tried to do. If a submarine was out in those waters we used to have them present as the pilots were making a landing out in the water. As the Japanese weren't treating pilots too well in those days. We'd tell them to see if you can't land in the water instead if you get hit. I said our trails actually crossed when I had Flag watch that day when you were shot down. Where our combat intelligence officer came and told us two planes were shot down. And one pilot was picked up. I didn't know then it was a fellow by the name of George Bush. We did find that out. I said, "Our trails actually crossed out there for the first time." Then of course later I got to know him.

Q: You've been involved in Republican politics here in Texas?

HUFFINGTON: I had. I guess I was born a Democrat, but after a period of time I got tired of the Democrats just taking all the money they could and giving it away, seeing it float away on the wind. I was a businessman and I thought the Republicans were doing a lot better in the way they handled the money. So, I've been primarily a Republican for years. Although there were some Democrats that I supported that were middle-of-the-road.

Q: Well, when you went to Austria, how did you get prepared for it? And did you have any problem with the nomination?

HUFFINGTON: I got prepared for it because I had the company. I guess we were dealing with probably over 65 other countries around the world, on all the continents. I would spend time negotiating with them. I negotiated personally with 30 out of the 34 Asian countries. With one government, sometimes three or four different governments. A lot of times we couldn't do it because it was too rough. Other times too much corruption. Like in Nigeria, too corrupt. I just had a lot of experience negotiating with other countries in Africa and Asia, South America. I had no worry about dealing with people.

If you got into a country you better know the top people in a hurry, because that's where you know if something's going wrong. I could always keep in touch. In Indonesia Sutowo used to like for me to come by and report to him on what's going on with the LNG all over the world. So I had no fear about what could I do.

I had been, at that time, recently been a member of the team that gave \$100,000 to the Republican Party. When Baker heard that, he said, "Oh my gosh, you may have a problem with your hearing before the Senate." Senator Biden and a couple of them are pretty tough people at that affair. But I looked at the people that were on the Senate.

There were four of us who went through the hearings at the same time. They quizzed the others quite a bit. I was a little bit nervous. No one asked me a question, and it was getting sort of toward the time. Senator Biden was in charge of it. It was before that a couple of the Democrats had come down and shook my hand and said, "Congratulations. We can't stay in the meeting; we've got other things we've got to do." That was a comforting feeling. To make a long story short, they were about to shut down the whole thing. And it was embarrassing; no one had asked me a question. Senator Lugar was sitting there, a Republican, and he asked me one question. Sort of a quick question. It had a simple answer. And with that the whole thing was over. So I had absolutely no [trouble] on that. But I felt I knew more about dealing with international relations than anyone I saw on the other side of the table.

Q: I'm sure you did. What about the dealing with the State Department, which is always more difficult than dealing with foreign relations. The Ambassadorial Seminar, did that help at all?

HUFFINGTON: That was interesting; I enjoyed that very much. I went out and took about six weeks worth of German, also at my expense, out at Monterrey, California, to their set-up. I had had a couple of years in college, but couldn't speak it. It was very helpful. I got to where I understood it very well.

No, I didn't have any problem with the State Department. Having been an independent man, and having run my own company and it was a one-man operation and in tough, tough circumstances, I never had any problem worrying about my job or anything. If I wanted to talk to someone, I'd knock on their door. I wanted to see them like that, so I could talk to anybody in the State Department.

When I got over to Austria, of course, one big problem that both Bush and Baker really said to me - they knew my background - but they said, "Let's see how you handle the Waldheim situation."

Q: In the first place, you were in Austria from 1990 to 1993. Could you explain what the Kurt Waldheim situation was at that time.

HUFFINGTON: Kurt Waldheim had been Secretary General of the United Nations for a bunch of years, I think a couple of terms. Couple of years before this he had been put on the 'watch list.' When he was running for president in Austria, he had neglected to put on his resume that he'd been in the Nazi Army. He'd been down to Greece or someplace.

Q: And Yugoslavia.

HUFFINGTON: And Yugoslavia. And a lot of people began to be suspicious since he didn't put it on his - then when he ran for president, to which he got elected, that he was hiding something. So they began to investigate. This gets into maybe some things that I can't get into that much. But somebody was convinced, made a political tradeoff, that maybe he might have been involved in shipping some Jews to Auschwitz.

Q: This was in all the papers and all that I guess by this time.

HUFFINGTON: It was. There wasn't any secret about that. I came to be convinced from all the information I saw and everything that he had to witness that. But what could you do about it? He went in a 2nd Lieutenant in the Nazi Army; he didn't want to go in. But he went in a 2nd Lieutenant and he came out a 2nd Lieutenant. There was plenty of opportunity for a promotion if he wanted to go up on that deal, because they were losing a lot.

So when I first got to Austria, [getting off] the plane, had a V.I.P. meeting at the airport with 25 different people: all the different press, the microphones there. The very first question they popped to me was, "What are you going to do about Waldheim?" And they sounded belligerent. I said, "The first thing I'm going to do is we're not going to talk about Waldheim at this meeting. We can talk about any and everything else, but we are not going to talk about Waldheim at this meeting today. I'll talk to you about him later any time you want to. We'll talk about other stuff." So I cut that off rather quickly, and then we got into an hour's discussion about other things going on which were pretty simple to handle.

Later, I got the press, I would invite them to come to the embassy or to the residence and visit with them about other things. There was one individual with one of the papers with the biggest circulation over there. He was pretty belligerent about this "Ambassador Huffington had come" and all that sort of stuff. To make a long story short, within six months I had everything under control. I got to be quite well-liked.

Other than that I didn't follow protocol. I did what I would do as a businessman on meeting people. I went out - there were about 90 ambassadors there - and I visited those ambassadors on my own and spent an hour with them at times. I didn't wait. Some of them came to see me, but if they didn't in between, I went out to visit them. Then I spent time going out in all nine provinces, visiting the governors, the lieutenant-governors, the mayors of the cities. I talked some at universities, sometimes even at grade schools a time or two. But I wanted to get out and mix and meet with all these people.

I developed a very friendly relationship with everyone out there. They later made me the 'Ambassador of the Year," and gave me an award for that. They said they would have done that the first year, except "you just came." So they couldn't do it. But it was mainly because you went out and dealt with these people. You sat in their place and talked to them about what their problems were, and "what we see and what you see." What should we all be doing. I found it to be quite enjoyable working with a lot of different people. I established a lot of friendships over there.

Q: Well, in the first place, how did the Waldheim thing come out during your tenure?

HUFFINGTON: It came out fine. When I got there the DCM, the number two man, when I was going to present my papers he said, "It's sort of likely you can't go anyplace and party for awhile," big presence and stuff like that. I told him, I said, "Look, I'm the ambassador and I'm going to do this and run this job the way I want to do it. If the State Department doesn't like it, they can call me out any time." In matter of fact, when we had that VIP meeting at the airport, I told the people, "I will promise you one thing. I will always be honest with you. I will tell you the truth. If I can't tell you the truth, I'll tell you I can't talk about it. And sometime I might tell you something that my own government might not like; and if that's the case I may not be around here very long. But I will tell you what I think we should do." And I think that sort of gave some reassurance that I was a credible individual.

So, when it came time to present the papers I'd been told my wife couldn't go in with me. She had to stand on the outside and it happened to be a rainy day. So she was on the outside where the embassy staff had put her. I drove up in the car, being escorted up in the Hofburg, in the President's Palace offices up there. One of that group from the President's office saw her and said, "Come with us." And so he took her up there, and she said she told him something, "I didn't think I could go up." And he says, "They would like to have you come up," like that. I later asked, and someone said that was the first time in 12 years that that had happened. Escorted up there, so she got to witness all this at that time.

We had a pleasant meeting for about an hour. Later I got to know Kurt Waldheim quite well. He wanted to know if I could be of any help, and I said, "Kurt, you did it to yourself. No way that anyone can help. Congress passed this and put you on the Watch List. If you had mentioned being in the Nazi Army," as everybody knew, if he had mentioned it, "when you were running for President, probably the suspicions wouldn't have come up all right. So you've got to live with it." And he did do that.

Our relationship with the Chancellor and everyone else was top notch. The Secretary General of the Foreign Office and I used to have lunch; I guess we had lunch about once a month. He'd buy one month and I'd buy another. We'd talk about all the affairs of the country and what was going on. Just developed a lot of good friendships.

The Austrians gave me a medal about a year ago. Not because of my ambassadorship, but because of what I did working with the country, for the country, and for the U.S. I set up these Danube Basin Conferences when I got over there, in which we would invite U.S. companies to come over and sort of like a business conference. I would go and spend time with the ambassadors in the six Warsaw Pact countries to find out where are these little companies that need money, aid and all of that.

We would get a number of those selected and bring them to Vienna. I'd fly U.S. companies over here and fly them around at my expense, in our own Phantom plane. Make companies around the U.S. come to Vienna. We would match them up, and put the Romanians in one room with a bunch of desks around and people who wanted to deal with Romanians, Hungarians in another, Czechs, Polish, Yugoslavs.

The first year, the Yugoslavs actually had the best economy. I was quite unhappy when the Austrians later on began to encourage the Croats to come out of Yugoslavia. That was because Croatia had been part of their Austro-Hungarian empire. And I said, "Look, we have Milosevic sitting over there itching to start a war, [Bosnia Herzegovina] and Serbia. And he's a Hitler-type dictator." I couldn't convince Mark, who was the Foreign Secretary, oForeign Minister, at that time. "Well, don't you think they deserve independence?" I said, "What we need to do is keep all of Yugoslavia at the conference table if it takes ten years, until they are sick and tired of each other. Then maybe peacefully you can break it up." But if the Croats can not start a civil war, and the president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman... Franjo Tudjman, in my book, was no better than Milosevic. He was ready to start something, too.

Q: Terrible combination of those two.

HUFFINGTON: Well then, that's why later they wanted to divide up Bosnia. Those Muslims down there weren't like Middle Eastern Muslims or anything. These were just the same as the rest, nationality-wise. But under the Turks for 400 years, they suddenly became Muslims as people do wherever they live. But that was a mistake, and unfortunately nothing was ever done about that.

Q: Were you given any suggestions or directions from the Department of State, during this critical period, to work on the Austrians to try to keep Yugoslavia together? Or to use their good offices to do that or not?

HUFFINGTON: No, I think the State Department at that time had a number of people, Eagleburger for instance, the number two man, who had a lot of experience down in the Balkans and all. So there were people that felt that they were pretty good experts, and they were. I talked to Mark a little bit. I wasn't in the position to do anything with the Germans. That wasn't my territory. But I could talk to Mark and say, you ought to talk to the Germans. The Austrians felt the same way. I think they felt more secure because of the Warsaw Pact countries splitting up. I think they thought, well, maybe some of the Yugoslav entities could break out... And it turned out that was not correct.

Q: How about the embassy? You knew your own companies so well. How did you find the embassy served you, and your relations with them?

HUFFINGTON: They were fine. There were a lot of good people there. Of course, the Ambassador is the boss; he's the personal representative of the President, and other than the military [contingents] who might be stationed there, everyone else in the country is under your jurisdiction. We worked well. I had good people and I was a little different sort of ambassador, as I found out from a lot of them. It was funny; I had time for everyone. When they said you don't have time to see these people. I said, "I want to know everyone that comes to this door. And I'll determine whether I can see them for 30 seconds or five minutes or something like that." So, quickly they found out I liked to talk to the people. So it worked fine.

Q: Who was your deputy?

HUFFINGTON: Michael... Oh, I'm getting Alzheimer's.

Q: Well, these things don't always pop up right away.

HUFFINGTON: He went to Germany as a Political Officer. They brought back to the States and then sent him to Germany as a Political Officer. He's retired now.

Q: Anyway, sometimes the marriage between the ambassador coming from outside and a Foreign Service officer as a DCM doesn't work.

How did it work with your deputy?

HUFFINGTON: My deputy and I worked very well together. He was more like the old line State Department employees were under the normal State Department ambassadors. You do certain things certain ways. I was a little bit different from that, in that if I was the man in charge, I was going to go at it the way I thought was best to get the results that we in the State Department and the U.S. government wanted. My technique has always been to get to know all of the people that you're dealing with very well and on a first hand, first name basis and never lock your door and sit behind it when you're too busy to do something, see as many people as you can. In fact, my wife got upset with me several times because I never took any time off, whether it be weekends or not, go off on a weekend someplace, as we were on an ambassadorial deal, and she thought we should see more of the country. But we had already driven all over Europe. Every country, in the years past, we had been there. So I enjoyed working very much.

My deputy was the one that said, "You can't see Waldheim." And I said, "I will see Waldheim. I'm not going to stay away from something just because he goes to that." And so when I met him and I saw him later, we were always courteous and friendly, polite. We'd be approached at times about what could I do about his position on the March List, and I finally convinced him there was nothing I could do, and that really it was his fault that he got on that. If he hadn't done that, I don't think it would have happened.

Q: Yes. Speaking of the embassy, were there any repercussions while you were there about Felix Bloch, who had been-

HUFFINGTON: I could never find out very much about Felix Bloch. Apparently he was well liked by a lot of people around Austria. That's one thing that everyone seemed to be sort of quiet about. I never could find out very much about Bloch.

Q: Well, he had been the Deputy Chief of Mission and all and was accused but never convicted or even tried for being a Soviet spy. It's sort of a very foggy thing.

HUFFINGTON: Well, it was one of those things, it may have been that he was in a position he knew something that if they'd gotten into a trial might not have worked out right. I never did know anything about him; I just later knew some people who knew him, said he'd been a very pleasant individual who didn't get around too much, who restricted where he went and what he did.

Q: How did you find the Austrians were responding to the breakup of the Soviet Empire and all that? I would have thought they would have been in an ideal position to use their entrepreneurial talents, openings and all, or did you find they were doing this?

HUFFINGTON: Yes, in fact, the nice thing about Austria having been a neutral country, they were actually doing some business with the Soviet Bloc all during this period of time, just like they were working with us. So they had a lot of contacts over there, and they were very pleased to see the breakup take place. I mean, as you remember, the East Germans had been to Austria through Czechoslovakia.

Q: And the Hungarians opened up the border.

HUFFINGTON: That's right. The Hungarians actually opened the border. The time I was there, there were a lot of people. It was a problem. There were a lot because of no food and other things in the old World War zone bloc. And a lot of those people would come across the border, I guess illegally. They were gathering in places where they would try and buy some items in Austria and then take them back to their countries and sell them at a higher price, so they were starting barter and sales so they could make a little money. It's the type of thing I used to see while I was there. I went over to Moscow one time, and I got a call from, I think it was, who said, "Why don't you come on over to Moscow and help work with the Russians over there? They've got holes in their pipelines." And Bob, an attorney in Washington, DC, that we had, who was ambassador there in Moscow-

Q: Strauss?

HUFFINGTON: Yes, Bob Strauss. A good friend of mine, too. Bob Strauss said - I called Bob because you're not supposed to intrude on anyone else's territory - he said, "Sure, come on over." Went over to see Turner Rayden, and the day I got there, Turner Rayden went in the hospital. Four days later he was still there, and I said, "I can't stick around here; I'll have to see him sometime later." I went back to Austria and later got involved with Russians, but that's another long story that's after everything sort of broke up. But I never did see Whitmore on that original deal. But I guess we created a fair amount of business into those Eastern Bloc countries by companies from the US. They were the ones we were really trying to stir up business for. And that was very much appreciated in Austria. They liked it very much, at last the businessman was coming to Austria.

Q: Were the Austrians good business people, did you find?

HUFFINGTON: They're good business people. They do business all over the world. Europeans do more of this business of any sort and variety all around the world than U.S. people do. We go over trying to do just our kind of business, in my case the oil business, and they're into a half a dozen different businesses.

Q: How were your relations with the State Department?

HUFFINGTON: Relationships were great. I only came back maybe a couple of times. I came back when the Chancellor of Austria - got that set up to come over to see President Bush. I came over at that time and sat in the Oval Room with an hour's interview and Chancellor's visit, and then the State Department - as a matter of fact, Jim Baker and I, I think, rode over to that interview together at the same time. I came to see Eagleburger a couple of times to talk about certain things that needed to be done. We were having, in a way, some difficulties with the Commerce Department. They weren't really cooperating as much on this business stuff as I thought they should be. I wanted to check some of those things out with Eagleburger. Eagleburger was great to work with, and Baker was always off handling much bigger things than that. Larry had to handle all the ambassadors that came by. But I found the relationships great. I could go in any place time and, no problem, just got a great reception, and I think I sold every point I was trying to make...

Q: Did you have any congressional problems?

HUFFINGTON: No, problems at all. I just met one or two congressional groups that came over. We prepared the embassy to give them a full morning's briefing if they wanted, or an hour's, whatever they wanted. Of course, the wives came along and the wives were more interested in [museums] and going shopping and all that stuff. We had all that stuff prepared, too. And usually by the time we'd had about an hour's meeting with the people from the House and Senate, wherever they may be from, why they were ready - they'd absorbed it all by then. It was good for them, but I did realize this: it's good for them to get out and see those countries, because the majority of these people in Congress, at least up until recently, had never been out of the country.

Q: I know it.

HUFFINGTON: They didn't know what it was like. They had no concept. Sometimes the questions were ridiculous.

Q: I'm a professional Foreign Service officer, at thirty years in, and I think most of us agree that, even though sometimes these Congressional trips are difficult, the big thing is it is a chance to sit down and talk to a Congressman and explain what's going on in the country, and Not many people have a chance to do this to a Congressman.

HUFFINGTON: This is correct. And I developed some really good relationships with several Democrats who came over like that because I could tell them not only about Austria, I could tell them about all of Europe, I could tell them about the Middle East, I could tell them about the rest of the world, too - things that were going on - that I knew were going on - in different countries, like dealings with [India?] and with other places like that. I think they found it interesting. They probably forgot it the next day.

Q: Something sticks.

HUFFINGTON: But at least you did something like that. The only problem I had with the actions that we took, and I've had a number of discussions with people about this since, was in the Iraqi campaign and stuff like that. Those last couple of days, as someone who had been in World War II and had witnessed what happened in Korea and other places, when you go in and you've got as bad a snake as you had in Saddam Hussein - he'd been killing his own people from the day he took over or killing his people doesn't mean anything to him - well, we just needed to go a couple of more days to Baghdad. I kept saying we've got to go, and Europe was adamantly set against it. I got [in touch with] the Prime Minister again, and I said, "We really need to go on up there and get that man," and he said, no, we shouldn't because the Arabs didn't want that to happen either, and neither did the State Department nor the White House. And years later I talked to Powell about it and others, you know, do you think we did right when we stopped, and I said based upon what I've seen in my wartime experience, when you've got somebody who's been bad and this fellow has, killing his own people before, he will rise again and grow two or three more heads on that snake, and you're going to have to get him out of there sometime someplace. He's going to kill his own people, and he doesn't care.

Q: I agree with you. I really feel that you might say the "television politics" got to Bush, Baker, and Colin Powell and they called it off two days too soon. And we could have bullied through. You know, you could have talked and said, "We're working on it," tell off the Republican Guard.

HUFFINGTON: We could have done it. That's just a personal difference. Had I been in charge, I would have done that. I was a flunky way down the line on it; I had nothing to do with it. That's my observation and what I thought would happen, and it did turn out that way, not that I'm proud of it, that aspect of it. I had really just this experience before, and I'd run into people that knew when Saddam Hussein took over the government, he'd gathered a lot of intelligentsia and wealthy, prominent business people and all, he took them out and killed them all. And I ran into families, I ran into a young fellow that was maybe 27, I think in Abu Dhabi or in the UAE, way back there after Hussein had been in. This fellow said that one night the police came by and picked up his brother, who was a couple of years younger and, he said, took him away. He said, he had done absolutely nothing, nor had he or anyone in the family, but they took his brother away and they never could find out where he was, and after about a week or so his family smuggled him out. They were worried, and he said they've never heard from his brother since then. My son knew a young lady in England, her family, her mother brought I think two girls and a boy as I recall. Her husband had been killed by Hussein, and they had left Iraq. It was just one of those things that everything was bad and he could kill whoever he wanted to kill.

Q: He's a monster.

HUFFINGTON: I came out, I guess, on an inauguration flight from Pan American from Houston to London. I went on with the president of Pan Am, the CEO of Pan Am, took about 10 of us on over to the Intercontinental Hotel in London on that inaugural nonstop flight, and when we were getting ready to come back, I'd gone down to check on the driver, who had been a former policeman that actually worked for Brown and Root. They were having him take us out to the airport. I went down. We were all packed. I was going to call my wife upstairs. I went in to call my wife, "Every thing's okay, I'll have him pick up the luggage." When I went back out, a couple of minutes later, I guess a former Iraqi ambassador had stepped out on the steps next to this driver of ours, and a lone assassin came up and pumped some bullets into the Iraqi ambassador, killed him. The driver said, "I looked right into his eyes; he looked into mine," and said, "I thought, I'm dead because he knows I would recognize him." But instead he turned and ran and ran across the street to a hotel, a well known little hotel, right across the street. The doorman at that hotel had been in the British commandos, and he heard the shots, could see this. This fellow I was with was chasing a little bit at that stage. As I recall the story, I think he had some sort of a little convertible and ran and was going to jump in - it was open - he was going to jump over into the seat and roar off on that. But when the commando and this driver, named Thackeray, the commando got him under control, and our driver came back over and drove us out. He was still shaking...

Q: Oh, my God!

HUFFINGTON: ...When he drove us out to the airport. But there were a lot of experiences like that with Saddam Hussein that I thought, This man is crazy. I mean, he doesn't care. He's one of those individuals who doesn't care about other people's lives. I don't know what the psychiatrists call an individual like that, but you need to get someone out of the deal.

Q: Well, I think probably this is a good place to stop. I want to thank you very much for this and...

End of interview